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Title:

Speech opening State Surf Lifesaving championships, South Port

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SPEECH BY THE PREMIER, MR. DUNSTAN, OPENING STATE SURF LIFESAVING
CHAMPIONSHIPS. SOUTH PORT. 16.3.75

Mr. MacKenzie, My Parliamentary colleagues, ladies and gentlemen :

Thank you very much for inviting me to open the 1975 State Surf Lifesaving Championships.

I'm delighted to do so because of the opportunity it gives me publicly to acknowledge the importance to South Australia of the Surf Lifesaving movement.

It's a lesson that's brought home to us - in dramatic and frequently hazardous circumstances - every summer.

This year has been no exception. Between November and the end of February, South Australian clubs made 86 rescues from the beaches they patrol.

Without their volunteer efforts and high level of proficiency there would undoubtedly have been some terrible tragedies.

And this has taken place at a time when the clubs are increasingly under strain through declining membership.

The clubs themselves are actively recruiting both directly and through the Nipper scheme. There's also the suggestion to be discussed at the next national conference - at South Australia's initiation - that women and girls should become lifesavers.

It's a suggestion I personally applaud and I'm not in the least surprised that such an anti-discriminatory move should come from South Australia - though I'd better warn you that, judging from my experience this week, reforms of sexist practices are not always plain sailing.

However, the situation facing the clubs is a serious one and I'd certainly repeat what I said at the Henley Club's jubilee last year: that the State Government is right behind you in any membership drive.

I think any young person joining the surf lifesaving movement will get enormous fun out of it and also the satisfaction of doing a really vital job for the community.

There's one other matter I'd like to mention today. Everyone using our beaches has been concerned by the apparent increase in shark sightings this season - and we were all dismayed by the tragedy off Point Sinclair.

The State Government is anxious to do all it can to reduce the shark menace to bathers and divers.

Your Association has raised with us the question of a Sydney inventor's sonic repellent device being tested in South Australian waters and the matter was also mentioned in Parliament this week.

Formal Government approval isn't required for the tests to be made but we have readily agreed to make Fisheries officers available to facilitate them.

Regardless of the outcome of any such tests we are also providing traditional protections such as meshing which has proven such a success in Australia and abroad.

Through the Coast Protection Board we are giving \$5,000 - half the cost - to put a mesh enclosure off the jetty at Port Lincoln. It will cover a 200-foot area including a popular diving spot.

The State Government will, of course, give immediate attention to any other suggestion the Association or member clubs have further to reduce this deadly menace.

Once again thank you for asking me to be with you today. These championships provide the people taking part - more than 500 this year - with some intensely energetic, highly competitive sport. They also directly improve the standard of lifesaving off our beaches and for that all South Australians should be grateful.

I have very much pleasure in officially declaring them open.

Thank You.

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